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SOLDIERS OF V CORPS' 32ND SIGNAL BATTALION KEEP LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN DURING EXERCISE

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GRAFENWOEHR TRAINING AREA, Germany – Some things never change.

Soldiers, whether arriving at a duty assignment for two weeks, or for a year or more, usually have one priority: calling or sending an e-mail home.



SPC BRANDON BONNER

Staff Sgt. Steven Brosseau of Company D of V Corps' 32nd Signal Battalion, 22nd Signal Brigade, sets up a crossover cable during the corps' recent Victory Focus exercise at the Grafenwoehr (Germany) Training Area.

Frequently the opportunity and access to these lines of communications -- even in remote areas of the world -- are taken for granted.

Working behind the scenes 24 hours a day to make that happen are signal Soldiers from units such as V Corps' 32nd Signal Battalion, 22nd Signal Brigade. Switching systems operators from the 32nd, based in Darmstadt, Germany, work to keep the lines of communication open, safe and secure, and available to their fellow Soldiers.

But the troops of the 32nd also spend much of their time preparing for those occasions when they must go to the field with forward deployed units and employ their skills, from the basic to the sophisticated.

The battalion's primary focus is supporting V Corps by providing tactical communications for all kinds of units, from civil affairs to combat engineers. The unit got to put those skills to work during the corps' recent Victory Focus exercise here.

Staff Sgt. Askia Wright is a switching system operator for the 32nd's headquarters element. "We are the backbone of V Corps," Wright said, joking, "V Corps couldn't talk without us."

The Soldiers stay prepared to go to the field by conducting regular rehearsal drills to practice connecting equipment quickly and efficiently.

"When something goes down, we try to get it up and running [within] 10 minutes," said Wright. When the technicians see that there is a problem somewhere, they contact those units they think are affected by it to get details and begin troubleshooting.

"Our mission is to provide secure data and secure voice, as well as unclassified data to our subscribers," said 1st Lt. Erik F. Hand, assistant officer in charge of plans and battle captain for battalion field maneuvers.

"We're involved in everything that goes on," said Sgt. Maj. Tony D. Harp, who is in charge of planning for the battalion.

"We've got a lot of experience here (among the Soldiers in the battalion control center) noted Wright, who spent eight years as an enlisted switching system operator.

The Soldiers of the 32nd participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom from February 2003 to March 2004, and are gearing up for another deployment this year.

